



Family bliss or relational overload?

Understanding consumer ambivalence towards family holidays

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Abstract

Widespread sociocultural ideals prescribe that family holidays should be happy and pleasant. However, the experienced practice of holidaying families does not always live up to this ideal. This paper digs into the consumer ambivalence which is part of consuming family holidays and seeks to identify ways in which families verbalize experienced gaps between ideals and practice and through their holiday narrations stage their family identities. Empirically, the paper draws on interviews with Danish families in relation to domestic holidays. The paper shows that gaps between ideals and practices are transcended by means of a variety of coping strategies. These include transforming bad experiences into good ones for example through the use of humour, redefinition of own needs to fit holiday realities, legitimization of children's behavior, and withdrawal from the family setting. Through the parents' narrations it becomes apparent that families struggle with gaps between ideals and practice but also that they invest significant efforts to cope with these gaps to ensure the account of the 'good family holiday'.

Keywords: Family holidays, consumer ambivalence, intergenerational relations, coping strategies, family identity.